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SUBJECT: PERU AND THE SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS (C-AL9-00153)

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Classified By: DCM James Nealon for reasons 1.4(c).

¶1. (U) This cable responds to reftel questions regarding Government of Peru perspectives on the April 17-19 Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago. The answers are keyed to reftel paragraphs.

¶2. (S/NF) The Government of Peru looks forward to the Obama administration's active engagement in the region, and sees the Summit of the Americas as a good point of departure. MFA officials have no expectation that the U.S. will come armed with magic bullets, roadmaps or solutions "from above," but are keen on seeing the USG demonstrate an openness to dialogue and a willingness to work together with its regional partners on shared challenges. That said, government officials hope that the U.S. response to the economic crisis -- in its domestic, regional and international dimensions -- will be the central item on the summit's agenda. There is also a hope that some additional stimulus package moneys might be injected into regional financial institutions such as the IDB.

-- One MFA official with responsibility for summit planning said the GOP had co-sponsored USG proposed language for the summit declaration, and sought to edit the current unreadably long and unwieldy draft document down to a succinct three themes: 1) Response to the international economic crisis; 2) Free trade and economic growth as a motor of development; 3) Reducing poverty as an urgent priority. He said he hoped the USG would support a push to ensure that a country with region-wide heft -- such as Mexico, Brazil or even the U.S. itself -- be selected to host the next summit, and thereby strengthen the Americas Summit structure and process. Given the prominence of energy on the Summit agenda and the possibility of electricity shortages in Peru during the next few years, the Peruvian delegation may seek additional US bilateral cooperation on renewable energy.

-- The GOP is formally seeking a bilateral meeting for President Garcia with President Obama on the margins of the summit. MFA officials see Peru as one of a small number of committed U.S. partners (that include Mexico, Colombia, Chile and Brazil) in a region divided along ideological, political and economic fault-lines, and where anti-U.S. feelings have flared. In the more private context of a bilateral meeting, President Garcia would seek to underscore the importance of U.S. engagement, discuss our broadly shared interests in Peru, the region and the world, and explore ways to build on recent accomplishments such as the Peru Trade Promotion Agreement (PTPA). It would also be an opportunity to discuss constructive ways of dealing with the less predictable governments of the region, particularly Bolivia (with which Peru's relations have been strained.) President Garcia forged a close relationship with former President Bush based on a sense of pragmatism and shared interests. For Garcia,

who leads an historically left-of-center political party and a government that has hewed a pragmatic centrist course, there is a presumption that ideological affinity with President Obama would further infuse the strong bilateral relationship.

¶3. (S/NF) MFA officials are unaware of any concrete plans to criticize or upstage the U.S. president, but freely acknowledge that some regional leaders are unpredictable. (Venezuelan President Chavez's recent public criticisms of President Obama have been widely interpreted in Peru as characteristic low blows that suggest an indifference and indisposition to real dialogue.) MFA officials speculate that the size and location of Trinidad and Tobago probably complicate planning for and potential implementation of a parallel summit but don't discard the possibility of some kind of minimalist event taking place.

-- One MFA official with responsibility for summit planning said that (as far as he knew) there would be no consensus demand for the U.S. to lift its economic embargo of Cuba, but he also noted that a proposal to lift Cuba's suspension from participating in the Summit of the Americas process was in the works. The Foreign Minister told the Ambassador there is indeed a move afoot to give Cuba issues generally more prominence.

¶4. (S/NF) Peru is fully committed to the Summit of the Americas process, and the MFA has successfully persuaded President Garcia -- who for domestic political reasons is deeply reluctant to travel abroad -- to agree to participate. One important reason for Garcia's decision is the opportunity to engage with the new U.S. administration and to

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meet President Obama. By contrast, the GOP has been a somewhat skeptical participant in UNASUR, Bahia and related regional organizations and meetings in which the U.S. or Canada are not participants. President Garcia has opted to send an envoy, usually the Vice President or Foreign Minister, to represent Peru at these events. The GOP's skepticism in this regard is rooted in the absence of ideological, political and strategic coherence among members states, which undermines the potential for forging meaningful region-wide consensus on fundamental issues.

¶5. (C) We can expect President Garcia to represent a countervailing force for pragmatism and civility during summit proceedings, and to seek to restrain potentially damaging interventions by Presidents Chavez, Morales, Ortega or others. President Garcia has publicly clashed with his Venezuelan counterpart on and off since the 2006 elections, and, according to insider reports, he has not flinched from offering friendly private advice to Chavez regarding acceptable behavior in international fora (eg, the 2008 EU-LAC Summit in Lima). MFA officials have also underscored Garcia's close relationship with Ecuadorean President Correa and his interest in nudging the younger man to adopt a less confrontational, more pragmatic approach to various regional issues.

¶6. (C) An MFA official with responsibility for human rights and justice issues told us Peru was not seeking to propose reforms to the Inter-American human rights system.  
MCKINLEY